

Were all these issues solved, and if a U.S.-Russian agreement were to be reached, how would a U.S. national missile defense affect China's strategic force structure and its relations with the United States? Would a geographically limited national missile defense—such as a boost-phase intercept system deployed only near “countries of concern”—permit China to maintain its nuclear deterrence at low force levels?

With a numerically limited defense, could we accept China increasing its strategic forces from 18 warheads to 200 or more? Would that prompt an arms race between China and India (and then Pakistan), or even with Russia?

Or would a “robust” national missile defense—whether deployed with Russian assent or without it—be so large as to simply strip away China's deterrent capability? If that were the case, what risk would we run of China deciding to attack Taiwan before that date arrived? How would we prepare for that possibility?

These are serious and complex questions that I have not heard debated or sufficiently discussed. That does not mean that they cannot be solved. It does underlie my own feeling, however, that the world may not be ready yet for the missile defense system that President Bush would like to build, even if the technology were available.

If the President seeks substantial world agreement on this course, then the ground must be prepared—not only in Alaska, but in world capitals from London and Paris to Tokyo, and from Moscow to Beijing. If he seriously intends to proceed in the face of world

objection, then we—and, whether they like it or not, the rest of the world—must prepare for all the complications that may result.

It would be unfair to expect President Bush and his team to have answered all these questions already. They have argued the case for a “robust” national missile defense only as a political issue, not as the carefully crafted policy of a government in power. That is understandable.

But now they are the Executive Branch of government. They are in power. Now theirs is the burden of putting real flesh on the mere bones of a policy that sufficed while they were the opposition.

What shall we say to those who take on that burden? On the one hand, we must wish them well. Nobody doubts the sincerity or morality of a belief in a national missile defense, only its practicality.

On the other hand, we must also say: Do not go blindly crashing into this new venture.

Remember Alexander Pope's line that “fools rush in, where angels fear to tread.” Remember also that the system you may wish to build does not yet exist. Neither has its feasibility or cost-effectiveness yet been adequately demonstrated.

The complexity of the issues raised by a national missile defense—and the lack of a proven design for even a limited missile defense, let alone a “robust” one—lead me to the following respectful suggestions to the President and his national security team:

(1) fold these issues into the “Nuclear Posture Review” mandated by the Congress last year;

(2) instruct our military experts to examine in that review the full range of interrelated offensive and defensive issues;

(3) give them time to analyze those issues fully and thoughtfully; and

(4) delay your decisions regarding missile defense architecture and deployment until that review has been completed and absorbed.

If President Bush and his team proceed with caution and with fully articulated policies and strategies, perhaps they will transform the world. For that is, indeed, their goal, and it is a laudable goal.

If they proceed rashly, however, the world is likely to be an unforgiving master. If they cannot develop a fully articulated policy, then perhaps a “robust” national missile defense is really an expression of the desire to be done with worldly cares, and not a truly rational approach to world leadership in the 21st century.

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL MONDAY,
JANUARY 29, 2001

Mr. BIDEN. If there be no further business to come before the Senate, I now ask unanimous consent the Senate stand in adjournment under the previous order.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 12:38 p.m., adjourned until Monday, January 29, 2001, at 12 noon.